

IN THE CLAIMS

Please substitute claims 1-8 with the following:

1. (Previously Presented) An information providing apparatus comprising:  
  
storage means for storing information, relevant information which is relevant to the information, and features of the information for each category of the information;  
  
acquiring means for acquiring information to be searched for;  
  
determining means for determining a category to which the information acquired by said acquiring means belongs;  
  
extracting means for extracting features of the information acquired by said acquiring means;  
  
comparing means for using the category to compare the features of the information with the features extracted by said extracting means, the former features being stored in said storage means; and  
  
searching means for searching for the target relevant information stored in said storage means based on the result of the comparison performed by said comparing means.
2. (Original) An information providing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the category has a hierarchical structure.
3. (Original) An information providing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said determining means determines the category based on a digital watermark, the digital watermark being inserted in the information acquired by said acquiring means.

4. (Previously Presented) An information providing method comprising the steps of:  
storing information, relevant information which is relevant to the information, and  
features of the information for each category of the information;  
acquiring information to be searched for;  
determining a category to which the information acquired in said acquiring step belongs;  
extracting features of the information acquired in said acquiring step;  
using the category, comparing the features of the information with the features extracted  
in said extracting step, the former features being stored in said storing step; and  
searching for the target relevant information stored in said storing step based on the result  
of the comparison performed in said comparing step.

5. (Previously Presented) A recording medium having a computer-readable program  
implementing a method comprising the steps of:  
storing information, relevant information which is relevant to the information, and  
features of the information for each category of the information;  
acquiring information to be searched for;  
determining a category to which the information acquired in said acquiring step belongs;  
extracting features of the information acquired in said acquiring step;  
using the category, comparing the features of the information with the features extracted  
in said extracting step, the former features being stored in said storing step; and  
searching for the target relevant information stored in said storing step based on the result  
of the comparison performed in said comparing step.

6. (Original) An information providing apparatus comprising:

acquiring means for acquiring information to be stored;

determining means for determining a category to which the information acquired by said acquiring means belongs;

inserting means for inserting a digital watermark in the information acquired by said acquiring means, the digital watermark corresponding to the category determined by said determining means;

storage means for storing the information in which the digital watermark is inserted by said inserting means; and

delivery means for delivering the information stored in said storage means via a network.

7. (Original) An information providing method comprising the steps of:

acquiring information to be stored;

determining a category to which the information acquired in said acquiring step belongs;

inserting a digital watermark in the information acquired in said acquiring step, the digital watermark corresponding to the category determined in said determining step;

storing the information in which the digital watermark is inserted in said inserting step;

and

delivering the information stored in said storing step via a network.

8. (Original) A recording medium having a computer-readable program implementing a method comprising the steps of:

acquiring information to be stored;  
determining a category to which the information acquired in said acquiring step belongs;  
inserting a digital watermark in the information acquired in said acquiring step, the digital watermark corresponding to the category determined in said determining step;  
storing the information in which the digital watermark is inserted in said inserting step;  
and  
delivering the information stored in said storing step via a network.